

THE MONT-BRONSON MYSTERY; OR DONALD DYKE'S MOST DIFFICULT CASE.

BY HARRY ROCKWOOD.

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RUMMEL KEYS HIS VOICE, carried away by his intense anger of the moment, Sheldon was heedless alike of the presence of his wife and the possible consequences of his impulsive action.

But Donald Dyke, with his accustomed readiness for an emergency, held his adversary at arm's length by means of his powerful arms. At the same time he uttered a few words of warning.

"You are beside yourself, Mr. Sheldon. I beg you, take thought before you let your anger carry you too far."

"I've a mind to brain you, Donald Dyke," roared Sheldon.

"Well, suppose you try your mind, have it your way. If you brain me, some other detective will have a job."

The detective spoke with an air of perfect unflinching.

The other was silent for several moments, his indignation losing its fire.

"Come, if you wish to use violent measures, do not exceed unnecessary time in the process," added Dyke at last.

Sheldon's hand closed upon the arm of the detective, and he attempted to force the latter back.

Angered by the persistence of the man, Dyke withdrew his arm free. At the same instant a powerful struggle ensued, and the two men were staggered across the room.

Sheldon uttered a low scream of intense horror. Dyke stopped, and said:

"Do not be alarmed, madam; no one is the worse for this encounter. It will not prolong the present illness, as I have another engagement."

Without further remark the detective went from the room.

Upon the spot he met a pleasant-looking, middle-aged woman. She was about to ring the bell as Dyke came out. A sudden thought caused the detective to ask:

"Are you Julia Brent?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, starting.

"You are lately been discharged from the position of housekeeper in this mansion?"

"Yes, sir, after sixteen years of service."

"What did the lady who was your mistress say?"

"Oh, to be sure, I shall be at the home of my mother in South Boston tonight and tomorrow morning till 10 o'clock."

"Will you see me in the morning; I have no time now."

"Very well, sir."

Dyke turned away, and entering a passing car returned to the city. He reached the junction of High and Federal streets at precisely 10 o'clock.

There was yet time before the expected arrival of the New York detective, so our hero entered an establishment on the corner of the junction.

When he returned to the appointed locality he found the lady dressed in black walking leisurely along, pushing a chair.

As Dyke approached, the seeming stranger turned toward him with a friendly smile.

"You are on time, Mr. Dyke."

"So it is Rummel in disguise," exclaimed the detective, recognizing the voice of the speaker.

Yes, I came disguised for purposes of my own. A jet black moustache, waxed to points, adorned the lip of the New York detective, and under the glasses he wore a pair of eyes that were not to be mistaken for those of a detective.

Are you ready to take me to the hiding-place of Grace Bronson? Dyke asked.

"I can always render you that promise."

"You said, could see her by entering a certain dwelling upon Broad street?"

"What is your purpose in showing me where she is?"

"To convince you that I know more concerning this crime than you do."

"If you deem Miss Bronson the guilty one, why do you not arrest her, instead of running the risk of my doing so?"

"Do you expect me to disclose all my secret proceedings?"

"Hardly. I shall not. I have reasons for postponing the arrest of the girl. If you think you can beat me by securing her, I will allow you to do so. Of course you will not break the conditions upon which we agreed this morning, however?"

"Certainly not."

"I shall have to take you into quarters which are not very comfortable."

"I am accustomed to that—perhaps as much so as you are."

"Why do you believe my experience is that line to be less than yours?"

"Because you are a detective, and the slums of New York. I am familiar with crime and criminals in all phases."

"Do not doubt the fact. But you may be surprised at the desperation and cunning of the 'Yankee outlaws' in Boston."

Rummel smiled. It was evident that he considered his own experience greatly superior to that of his rival. He had, however, a more detailed account of the Boston detective's labors upon the mystery enshrouding the great robbery of the late Mrs. Grace Bronson.

The papers could not make him comprehend how clear-headed and efficient Donald Dyke had been in his search for the guilty one.

While they were speaking they had reached the wharves, and a point nearly opposite the wharves.

From thence they stepped into a narrow, dimly-lighted alley. The girl, who was no more than some fifteen years of age, passed before a high, narrow brick building.

Stepping to one of the several entrances he rang a bell.

In response a small fire-brick-faced urchin opened the door.

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